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**Title:** Address from the Third Commencement by Charles Nisbet

**Date:** June 2, 1788

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June 2d 1789.

Gentlemen,

You have now performed the Exercises prescribed by Custom for obtaining your first Degree, & undergone an Examination in the sundry parts of Learning with which you have been conversant, & are now about to enter into the world to act for yourselves in those Professions to which you may be led by the call of Duty & inclination.

It were no doubt to be wished that you had been able to spend a longer time in the study of Learning, & that you had had the leisure enough in the intervals of public Lessons to improve your minds by reading the most approved Authors ancient & modern who have treated of those subjects in which you have been initiated. A more leisurely & full contemplation of Nature & of the human Mind as both are delineated in the works of the most celebrated Philosophers, might have exercised your Talents to greater advantage, & added much to your present acquisitions. But as we must yield to necessity, & the Circumstances of the present times, it will at least, we hope, be of some advantage to you that you have had the opportunity of studying the Elements of Languages & Sciences, & exercising your faculties in the study of human Nature, & particularly the Nature & duties of Society which have the greatest influence on public & private happiness.

The study of Science for personal entertainment affords indeed a noble & worthy exercise to the human faculties, & gives a pleasure to Men of Learning & leisure, which is superior to vulgar & sensual gratifications; but as we are made for action, & born members of Society, whereby we are necessarily connected with others, utility ought to be our great object in all our studies, & we ought to look into the nature of men & things only that we may be directed how to promote our own happiness & that of others, by a careful, attentive & conscientious performance

of our several Relations. To be good men, good citizens & members of society, & to perform exactly & faithfully the duty of Parents, children, Neighbours, friends & relations, is the great end, therefore, that you ought to have in view, & the best proof that you can exhibit to others of your success in your studies; & the knowledge you have acquired of the nature & order of things & of the duties of social life ought to assist you greatly in the pursuit of it. Without knowing what is required of us, & what tends most to the happiness of ourselves & others, we must utterly at a loss what to do, & be led only by blind impulse, or by the example of others; & if we are not acquainted without the grounds & reasons of our several Duties we will be in danger of neglecting them altogether, or of being diverted from them by the slightest temptations.

If by the care you have already bestowed on the improvement of your minds, you have only acquired a habit of thoughtfulness & attention to the nature & order of things, you will have acquired a great deal. And if you make use of the instructions that you have already received, & apply them to whatever you have occasion to read or observe, you will find that they throw a new light on every object, by enabling you to discover their mutual relations & dependencies on each other. Attention to these will lead you to the true interest & dignity of Man, as well as preserve you from the usual effects of rashness, folly & thoughtlessness; & while it affords a most agreeable employment to your thoughts, it will contribute no less to amend your hearts, & to lead you to the practice of virtue & Piety.

A virtuous Conduct implies order, proportion, rectitude & Propriety, & when you find that besides a pleasing sense of these, it will procure you the approbation of your own minds, you

will be more confirmed in the Love & practice of it. A virtuous Conduct is the only rational one that can produce inward satisfaction, & the approbation of the

wise & good. To live without these, is folly & misery, & to enjoy them is highly agreeable to the rational nature. As more pains have been bestowed on your education than on that of many others, it will naturally be expected that you should be capable of behaving better on every occasion. Such an expectation is both natural & just, & if you would accustom yourselves to reflect that such expectations are formed of you, it might be of the greatest use to you in your conduct in society. For if you are not more decent, more regular, more intelligent, more courteous, more just, more temperate, upright & obliging than others, it will naturally be asked, to what purpose was any expence bestowed on your education; or perhaps it may be concluded that your Masters can teach no better. How unjust the latter Reflexion would be, you yourselves are witnesses, & we hope that you will take care that the other may not occur to any person on account of your behaviour. It was a maxim of the Pythagorean Philosophers, that one ought to revere himself. And indeed if you are not habitually impressed with a sense of the Dignity of human nature, & the perfections of which it is capable, it is impossible that you should be careful or regular in your conduct. The man who has no ambition to do better than others, or who thinks any conduct, company or character good enough for himself, is not likely to make any progress in wisdom or virtue; content to live just as others do, & having ambition for excellence & distinction, he will naturally imitate the wisest manners, conform himself to the lowest customs, & frequent the meanest & most scandalous company to which Habit will soon assimilate him. But if you are ambitious of excellence, & cherish the Love of Order & the study of Perfection in every thing, you will often be displeas'd with yourselves, as well as others, for neglecting your Duty, & you will be endeavoring daily to attain more exactness, propriety, decency & uniformity in your Conduct. The faults that offend you in others, you will study to correct in yourselves, & ever mindful of your remaining imperfections you will study to throw them off one by one, & to attain to

such a Behaviour as may not only give you satisfaction in your minds, but which may likewise procure you the approbation of those that are judges of real merit.

A too great anxiety to please others, & utter disregard to their opinion, are extremes, which we ought carefully & equally to avoid, as besides that the greatest part of mankind are bad patterns for imitation, there is a meanness in conducting ourselves merely according to the opinion of others as if we had no capacity of thinking or choosing for ourselves. On the other hand an utter Disregard & contempt of the opinions of others, is unsocial, harsh, & universally hateful, & denotes an empty, selfish, ignorant & haughty mind. There are so many things in life that are wholly indifferent that you will not want abundance of opportunity in those to testify your desire of pleasing others; but in matters of importance wherein Religion & morality are concerned, it would be utterly inexcusable to let others judge for you, or blindly to follow their opinions or example. A decent firmness in these matters, & a constant adherence to the dictates of Conscience with an ease & complaisance to others in inferior matters, marks the character of a wise & good man, who knows & distinguishes the differences of things.

We would wish first to suggest to you briefly, your Duty to God, & your Neighbours, & then add some hints with regard to your Studies. In the first place therefore, Remember your Creator

in the Days of your youth, if you expect either happiness or reputation. Nothing so clearly demonstrates the corruption of our natures by Sin, as the need we have to be put in mind of God, who has impressed the signatures of his perfections on all his Works in such a manner that we ought to see him in every thing, & habitually to consider all things as dependent on him. But on this account we ought to be the more careful that so interesting an object do not escape us, & to take every opportunity of recalling him to our thoughts. The Study of the Holy Scriptures, daily & humble devotion, an attentive contemplation of Nature as his Works, & especially a daily & strict attention

to his acting on our minds, are excellent means of keeping us in remembrance of him. But if you only consider that your life & health is his gift, that all the comforts you enjoy are the effects of his mercy & patience, & that when you lie down & awake in health, it is because he makes you to dwell in safety, & that he loved you, & gave his only begotten Son for your Redemption, you will see what infinite reason you have to love him, & remember him continually, & to do those things that are pleasing in his sight, while you have the additional encouragement to reflect that nothing is commanded as a Duty which does not at the same time tend your true happiness both in this life, & through eternity.

Pray unto God daily morning & evening, not in a careless & formal manner, nor with coldness, indifference, or absence of heart. Consider what he is, what he has done for you, & the greater things that he has promised you in the Gospel, & these thoughts will excite devout affections, & an humble veneration to the Father of Spirits. Consider what you want, & to how many dangers you are exposed, & you will not want matter for prayer, thanksgiving, confession, & humiliation. Endeavour to read a little of the Scriptures daily, & select a particular text or two for your daily meditation, & the direction of your conduct. Thus the word of God will dwell in you, & restrain you from sinning against him, as well as guide your choice to that which is best, & determine you to the best ends. Observe the Lord's day with reverence, meditate on his glorious works, especially on the work of Redemption through Christ, to the memory of which the Christian Sabbath is peculiarly dedicated. Read his blessed word which is the best comment on his works, as being of the same author; & let nothing but necessity hinder you from attending on the public Duties of his worship. Hear the word of God with a reverent sense of its truth & authority; let your Conscience be awake to your own condition & wants, that you may apply the word to yourself, & profit by it. Worthless & profane Persons may endeavour to dissuade you from public Duties, & to make you believe that you may be as well employed at home; but in what company would you expect to hear as many admonitions &

instructions as you will find in the most ordinary Sermon? Besides, God's blessing may be expected by those that regard his word, & pay reverence to his institutions, & this those cannot expect who prefer their own fancies before them. A regular attendance on public religious Duties not only tends to strengthen our devotion, & to encrease our charity by praying with, & for others, & joining with them in acts of worship, but also to introduce order & regularity into the whole of our conduct; & this is most commonly found among those that are regular in their attendance on public worship. On the other hand, those who disregard the Lord's day, are commonly indolent, dishonest, & disorderly in their lives, regardless of their word or promise, deficient in the performance of social Duties, ignorant, idle, intemperate & shameless, as well as

totally inattentive to the private duties of Religion. Observe the number of those who habitually neglect the Sabbath, & you will find that they do not stay at home to say their prayers, but to employ themselves in wicked, childish & foolish actions; most of them spend the sacred time in mere indolence, & so enjoy only the Sabbath of the Ox & the Ass, by a cessation from their labors, or in conversation & employment that is still worse than idleness. If one were at the pains to make a list of the various trifles & follies in which men employ the Sabbath, & which they prefer to the ordinances of the Gospel, it would strongly demonstrate the meanness & wickedness of the neglect of the Sabbath, & be a persuasive to the rational & religious improvement of it.

In the age that you live in, you will often meet with men, who openly despise Religion, & affect to disbelieve the Scriptures, & prize the fancies & dreams of wicked men to the revealed Word of God. Avoid such men as you would do persons infected by the plague, or some other mortal & contagious Disease. Such men are the pests of Society, & the corrupters & Destroyers of youth by their profane & blasphemous conversation, whatever may be their pretences, although they will sometimes pretend to Reason, impartiality, & regard to Morals, & to be enemies only to superstition, enthusiasm & persecution. Observe the drift & tendency of their Conversation, & you will find that they are really enemies to Truth, Virtue

& Religion, & consequently to the best interests of mankind; while they boast of liberality of sentiment, & freedom from prejudice, they treat all sentiments except their own with contempt & insolence as superstition, priestcraft & delusion; & while they profess to abominate persecution, they are inflicting the most cruel & tormenting species of Persecution on all the followers of Christ & his Religion, we mean, those cruel mockings & insults which the Scripture reckons among the most painful sufferings of Christians, & which are most afflicting to men of generous Spirits, even more than bodily pain, & which have done more harm to the interests of Religion than all the ten persecutions of the heathen Emperors. Beware of being the Dupes of these false pretenders to an aversion to Persecution, & consider them as what they really are, that is, as the most cruel, as well as the most dangerous species of Persecutors, & as enemies to the happiness of mankind. While they promise you Liberty, they consider not that they themselves are the slaves of corruption, & their only aim is to make you as miserable & worthless as themselves by robbing you of your innocence, & engaging you in the slavery of animal appetites.

The man who blasphemes your God, can never be a friend to yourselves, & the man who despises the infinite Wisdom of God in his Word, is not a person from whom you can learn any Wisdom. Enter into no friendship nor fellowship with such men, whatever they talk of Charity & toleration. Leave them to the Indians, the most proper companions of the Despisers of the Gospel, as their words will eat as doth a Canker, as they only desire to defile your imaginations with impure ideas to extirpate all Reverence for God, all distinction between truth & falsehood, right & wrong, out of your minds, that you may be led by subjection to appetite in the broad way that leads down to the chambers of death.

With regard to your Neighbours, remember that we are naturally members of Society, & that we were not made for ourselves only. The Love of mankind does not require that you should either flatter them in their vices, or follow their evil example, but that you should study to promote their real interests. Love is the fulfilling of the Christian Law; but it is a love without dissimulation & inseparably connected with abhorrence

of evil. To impart Wisdom, to restrain evil passions, to give friendly hints of the destructive nature of vice to recommend a virtuous & orderly behaviour, the greatest services that we can do to others. But in the common intercourse & offices of life, we have thousands of opportunities of manifesting a kind, social & charitable disposition to others, & their offences give us but too many opportunities of manifesting a meek & forgiving Spirit, more indeed than we are able to improve in a proper manner. Let your indignation, however, be against the vices, & not the persons of Men. They are God's Creatures, & however corrupted they are at present, he is able to make them better. Set them a good example, & pray for them to God, who can alone change them.

Remember that veracity & faithfulness are the foundations of innocence, & the only basis on which a virtuous Character can be raised; & that lying & dishonesty are mean & disgraceful, as well as hurtful & hateful vices. In all your words & promises have always a sacred regard to truth, & never think of palliating mean vices by meaner excuses. The apology for any vice is an addition to it, & must raise the abhorrence of all lovers of truth & virtue. Truth & honesty are the great bonds of Society, & unless these are prevalent in it, no Society whatever can subsist. The Society of the builders of Babel was dissolved by the confusion of their languages, when they could no longer understand one another; & Society among us is nigh to a dissolution by a confusion of falsehood; so that one can no more trust what is said or promised by another than he could understand the most unknown foreign tongue. Shameless breath of engagements have been countenanced among us by men of almost every description, & truth & confidence appear to be almost extinguished. But as the judgment of a foreigner may be suspected of partiality, we shall quote a few words from publications of native Americans that must be above all suspicion in this respect. One of these says, "We may indeed with propriety be said to have reached almost the last stage of national humiliation. There is scarcely any

thing that can wound the pride, or degrade the character of an independent nation, which we do not experience. Are there engagements, to the performance of which we are held by every tie respectable among Men? These are the subjects of constant & unblushing violation. Do we owe debts to foreigners, & to our own citizens, contracted in a time of imminent perils, for the preservation of our political existence? These remain without any proper & satisfactory provision for their discharges. To private credit, the friend & patron of industry? That most useful kind which relates to borrowing & lending, is reduced within the narrowest limits, & this still more from an opinion of insecurity than from a scarcity of money." Another in one of our monthly publications says, "A Republic can never be just till a great majority of her Citizens are virtuous. This may be the case some years hence in Pennsylvania, but who will dare to say that this is the case now? And till this change is produced in your morals, who would risque a loan office in Pennsylvania?" We could likewise quote the authority of the present worthy President of the United States, who in an answer to a public address justly observes that "Common sense & common honesty alone are required to make us a great & flourishing people." But these it seems are wanting, & a great want truly they are, & not easy to be supplied, & indeed not at all unless every man endeavours to reform himself. But do these writers intend to reproach their Country? Certainly no; no more than we do in quoting them to you; but their intention is to awaken the spirit of the American Nation to rise above that contempt into which they are fallen among other nations by the basest conduct, & to persuade them to reform themselves, if they would not be the

object of the contempt & execration of other nations. Let this character of America die with the present generation. You have certainly been taught otherwise, & it will be your own fault if you do not contribute your several parts to redeem the character of your Country. Let your words be sacred to you, & never give any man occasion to reproach you with falsehood or knavery. Even those who themselves are guilty of those vices, abhor them in others, when they come to suffer

by them, yet their want of common sense will not suffer them to discover that justice & truth are best for all, & that if a man expects that others would tell him the Truth, & deal honestly by him, as all men certainly do, he ought to behave in the same manner towards them. Beware of extinguishing a sense of shame in yourselves, & never listen to apologies for dishonesty, as when men are so far gone in vice as to endeavour to defend their own Crimes, there can be but little hope entertained for their Reformation.

Reverence to Parents is a duty of natural Religion; they are appointed by God to have the charge of your tender years, & he has implanted in them such a Love of their offspring that you cannot doubt their most serious inclination for your welfare, which they have likewise testified by giving you a liberal education. Convince them that you have profited by it, by a most obedient, kind & submissive behaviour to them. To reflect the order of Nature, & the appointments of Providence, & to reckon it honorable to obey those whom God & Nature has set over us, is the mark of a generous, noble & upright mind, & leads to the most rational pleasure, & satisfaction; whereas to resist & dispute the order of Nature, to give grief & uneasiness to those whom we ought to study to please, is the mark of a mean, ungrateful & unsocial disposition, & must lead to inward uneasiness & self condemnation. Be assured that your Consciences will never suffer you to be easy in disobeying your Parents, or in performing their orders with disagreeable reluctance. Obedience of this kind is but a species of Disobedience, & can give no satisfaction to those who have a right to your most hearty obedience, & sincere attachment. Beware of forward & impudent behaviour. Modesty & Gentleness are the most amiable characteristics of youth, & impudence in that age is peculiarly disagreeable, as being unnatural & unseemly. You have need of the favor & approbation of others to give you a character, & to help you forward in the world; & there is not a readier way of losing esteem than by behaving insolently & contemptuously to others, & showing a mind hardened against shame. Attend patiently to the conversation of others, & beware

of the love of Contradiction & disputation, which is disagreeable in all, but especially in youth. Do not think yourselves obliged to reply to every thing that you hear. There is nothing so common as Absurdity, & a prudent man will oftentimes find it best to let it pass without notice, as Contradiction, instead of lessening, is found to encrease the attachment that men have to their own favorite opinions & prejudices.

Never affect Learning, nor attempt to boast of it. A person who does so, only makes it plain that he has not Learning enough, when he introduces it improperly into conversation. Let your Learning appear by the wisdom of your Conduct, the modesty of your Conversation, & the practice of social virtues, & not by boasting or childish impertinence.

With regard to friendship, which is so great importance in life, & which has so great an influence on the character & circumstances of men, considerable caution is necessary, as nothing is more generally hurtful to youth than friendship & intimacies rashly contracted with wicked or

selfish men, especially of their own age. There are but few men who are formed for real friendship, & though a real friend is one of the most important goods in life, yet of all others this is the most hard to find, as those who have been most desirous of this kind of possession, have uniformly complained from experience. “Most men,” says Solomon, “will proclaim every one his own Goodness; but a faithful man, who can find?” Be cautious therefore of contracting intimacies, or trusting yourselves to strangers on slight acquaintance, & especially be zealous of those who endeavour to pry into your private affairs, & to discover your most secret thoughts & inclinations for their own purposes. Be on your guard against those who pretend to instruct you, & to alter your notions of right & wrong. Free Benevolence itself is nothing so communicative as youthful Petulance, & a selfish desire of command. Hearken decently to what every one says, & weigh it in the Ballance of Reason as you have been taught;

but do not imagine that every one is fit to teach you, & beware of taking opinions on trust without proof. Renounce the society of all who endeavour to lessen your reverence for God & your Parents, & to persuade you that there is no difference between right & wrong, & that the laws of Religion & Morality are only the inventions of men. Leave the company of those who use indecent language & profane swearing; you can never get good from those who are stained with these vices, & if you frequent their company, it will soon be tolerable, & then pleasing by your imitation of their vices. The man who is not offended with such vices, has no regard to God & religion, in the same manner as we could not persuade ourselves that a man had any friendship for us, if he could contentedly bear to hear us treated with indignity, & delighted in the company of those who did so. Regard every man for what he is, but be not too soon persuaded that he is what he pretends to be. Do not expect that a man should tell you that he is a knave, or a selfish designing person, who only wishes to deceive or entrap you; but be not surprised if you should discover that those who are the most forward in the offer of their friendship & services are of this stamp. The garb of virtue is a decent one, for which reason every one puts it on, whatever be his Character & views. Judge by experience rather than by rash impulse & youthful presumption; & enquire how a man has treated his former friends before you are forward to add yourself to the number of them. Too much familiarity breeds contempt, & not seldom quarrels & hatred. Be rather reserved than communicative, & distrust those that are so till you know them better.

With regard to yourselves, remember that Temperance is necessary for the exercise of your faculties, the maintaining of your rational liberty, & the performance of all your duties. To be the slave of animal appetites, is the greatest indignity of the rational nature, & renders a man unsusceptible of the enjoyments, as well as inca-

pable of the duties of Life. Now of all the Joys of life, the consciousness of dignity & propriety of Conduct is surely one of the greatest, & this an intemperate man can never have, as his excesses must lose him his own approbation, as well as that of others, & torment him with the remembrance that he is despised by others, as well as condemned by himself, by being the slave of animal Appetites.

Activity & application is the fruit of temperance, & cannot exist without it. Avoid idleness as the greatest plague, & be always employed in some worthy occupation. The active powers languish by idleness, & the mind destitute of employment, & consequently of entertainment, contrives pains or temptations to itself, life becomes unpleasant & burdensome, & the most



odious vices, & the meanest company, are often embraced merely to pass the time. The active engagements of life are so numerous, & the opportunities of doing good so many, that we need never be without suitable employment. The improvement of your own minds & characters, the necessities of others, & the various opportunities of being serviceable to them, which a benevolent & active mind will easily discover, will always be sufficient to furnish you with employment & to defend from the attacks of Melancholy & indolence.

We shall only add a few directions with regard to Learning & Study.

The pursuit of knowledge is not only necessary for youth, but ought to be continued through Life. Although you ought never to prefer study to any of the active engagements or necessary duties of social life, we hope that you will never lose any opportunities of improving yourselves. If you have attended to the instructions already given you, you will not be able to give over the pursuit of knowledge. If you are possessed of a habit of Reflection, & make a wise improvement of the Leisure that is often bestowed on bad occupations, you will not neglect any opportunity of improving your minds; & for your encouragement in this, we would have you to remark that the greatest part of the Discoveries that have been made in the Sciences, & the most considerable works of Learning, have not ge-

nerally been the productions of professed Scholars, or men of leisure, but of men who had many necessary duties to fulfil, & who never omitted any necessary duties for the sake of study. The faculties of the mind are increased & improved by exercise, & a man that is most active in his profession, will always have the most leisure, let his employments be ever so great. As your time is the most precious of your possessions, endeavour to make the most of it, & beware of a procrastinating & indolent temper that leads men to delay necessary business, & the performance of lawful engagements from day to day. A habit of this sort must have the most ruinous consequences in life, as none will trust, nor find it possible to esteem a person of this character. What may be done to day never leave till to morrow, as equal reasons for delay will always occur. Nothing can give more inward satisfaction than the consciousness of having done our Duty, & that we have not neglected any lawful & necessary engagements: on the contrary, a person of an indolent & procrastinating temper must not only be false to his engagements, hurtful to those who trust him, & an object of abhorrence to all who know him, but also habitually uneasy in his mind, & unsatisfied with himself, looking on business with that horror & aversion that are natural to indolence. The very thoughts of it are tormenting to him, & he cannot resolve to begin it, nor be easy in omitting it, as no man can totally silence the remonstrances of his Conscience, nor enjoy ease while his business is neglected, & his engagements remain unperformed.

Whatever Profession or engagement, therefore, you shall be directed to embrace, endeavour to excel in it, & resolve to fulfil its duties with f dilligence & faithfulness, & expect no ease of mind in the neglect of them. A sluggard must always be poor, unhappy, dishonest & infamous, but a person who fulfils the duties of his profession, will be contented, upright, faithful & satisfied in his own

mind, & will be deserving of Reputation, whether he actually obtains it or not.

In the intervals of Business, for such these will readiest find that attend vigorously to their duty, instead of giving way to indolence or the sordid pursuits of intemperance, cultivate the

study of Letters, & even in the course of business be attentive to the workings of human Nature, & the events of Providence. It is from these that we derive that practical sort of knowledge which we call Experience, & which is of so much use in life. The reasons of many of the precepts that have been given you, & the truth of the many observations that you have heard on human Nature, will appear much more evident than they can do at present, when you come to be engaged in active life.

Besides religious & Christian knowledge which every man ought to be ashamed to want, & which he will best acquire by studying the Holy Scriptures, be most attentive to those publications, which treat of the Duties of Society, the beauty & advantages of a virtuous conduct, & the evil effects of vice & libertinism on human Society. Avoid infidel tracts which tend to loose the bonds of society, to destroy Science, & to make men slaves to animal appetites. Observe the moral tendency of every work that you read, & judge of it accordingly. Be assured that those writings which represent Truth & falsehood, virtue & vice as wholly indifferent, & which take away the distinction between Moral Good & evil, can neither ever improve your Understanding, nor amend your hearts & lives. We know that they had not that effect on the Authors of them, & daily experience testifies that they have produced the most shameless immorality in the lives of their disciples who abound among us. The man who believes that there is a just & holy God who hates vice, & cannot but punish it, may be expected to be upright & honest in his dealings, but the man who believes nothing at all, or who believes that all opinions are indifferent, having nothing to fear from wrong conduct, according to his own principles, may be expected

to be faithless, dishonest, impudent & intemperate, being led merely by selfish passions, which are the only principles of his conduct. Remember therefore that your conduct can never be indifferent; but that according as you live here, you will be happy or miserable both here & hereafter, as whatever proud & ignorant men may think, God will bring every secret work to light whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Meditate often on the nature of human Society, & consider the Laws that God has established in the world, whereby Virtue contributes to inward satisfaction, security, health & reputation in respect to the individual, & to conduct, justice, peace, riches & aggrandizement with respect to society. Vice is naturally a dividing principle, & tends to set a man at odds with himself, & his own judgment, as well as to expose him to the hatred, enmity, contempt & execration of others; & however artfully men may contrive to balance the interests & ambition of individuals, nothing but virtue & true Religion will ever make a happy or a flourishing Society. To expect this from Civil Laws, though a fashionable opinion at present, is ignorance & folly in the extreme, & cannot be maintained by any that are duly acquainted with human Nature. Human Society is supported by an infinite number of transactions & exchanges amongst men, whereby they mutually supply the wants of each other; & virtue & Religion are the only principles that can give effect & regularity to their transactions, & secure their continuance, as if every human transaction were to be the subject of legal discussion, we would need a whole army of judges to sit day & night deciding controversies & the age of Methusalem would not be long enough for the Discussions that would be necessary in a small Society.

Fear God, & keep his commandments, for this is the whole Duty of man. Religion & Philosophy will teach you to perform all the duties of Society, & to do that freely, & of your own accord,

which others are hardly constrained to do by the force of laws, & the terror of punishments. An honest man who loves God & his Neighbour, is much more honorable, & a more worthy member of Society than ten millions of knaves, however artful & skilled in their profession.

Maintain the dignity of honest men, & your will deserve respect, whether you obtain it or not. Endeavour likewise to support the honor of this Seminary in which you have been taught the principles of true morality & religion. The public will naturally judge of the usefulness & importance of Seminaries by the character & conduct of those who have been bred in them; & it is your duty to take care that they may judge in your favors, & that they may think that if Seminaries furnish them with only a few wise, upright & honest Citizens, they will be of more use to them than all their legislative Bodies which hitherto have done little else than teach them to cheat one another with paper money.

As you are Citizens of a great & free Republic, the fate & Proceedings of which occupy a good part of the attention of the world, at present, endeavour to conceive just notions of public interest, & never imagine that public interest can be promoted by the breach of public order, or by the transgression of the Laws of Justice & decency. Beware of the pestilent spirit of Party, or of preferring the interest & opinions of a few wild men to the good of the whole society; at the same time be not surprised to hear many men entertaining the most false notions of Liberty, & imagining that it consists in an utter contempt of all Laws both divine & human; & although you have had the benefit of an accademical education, be not surprised to find that men who have not had a good Education should be preferred before you. Such things must be expected in Republics, especially in a corrupt state

of morals & taste, which unfortunately is the case with us at present in this Country.

Revere & observe the Laws of your Country, although you should be persuaded on good grounds that they are not the best that can be made, & that they need great & important alterations. Imperfection is the signature of all the works of man, but it ought neither to be defended, nor ought it on the other to be rectified in an irregular & violent manner, as such would introduce a still greater imperfection. Some abuses may be expected always to continue, even though they should be always condemned. Some men are so absurd that they will not assent to any Laws or form of Government, except every thing in it is so ordered as if they themselves had had the sole power of forming it. But if we were to have public Constitution till every individual were as well satisfied with it as if he himself had made it, we would never have any to the end of the World.

Study always a peaceable Behaviour, & avoid quarrels & contentions as much as possible; as unless the freedom that is allowed in Republics of expressing our own sentiments be accompanied with the Love of peace & concord, it would prove a Curse instead of being a blessing. So many individuals of different characters, tastes & opinions, declaring their differences & oppositions without restraint would effectually destroy the peace of the public, & at last terminate in a civil War. Be not surprised that others differ from you in opinion, nor affect to stare at the follies of men. Nothing is so natural to mankind as folly & absurdity, & nothing should occasion less surprise. You may be allowed to wonder when you find a man talk justly, & dealing honestly & uprightly, because such men are truly rare, & may be presented as Curiosities to the philosophical society; but to find fools or knaves in a world that is full of them,

ought to excite no surprise whatever. Take care in the mean time that your Consciences do not reproach

you as guilty of the same things which it obliges to censure in the Lives of others.

Cherish a proper sense of honor & shame, & never be indifferent with regard to reputation. The man who cannot be ashamed, & who cares not for what others think or say of him, is lost to virtue, & dead to one of its strongest principles. Such a person is prepared for every villainy, & ought to be the object of your contempt & execration. In the choice of your company & friends, avoid all men of this character with the utmost horror; their company is infectious, & even the very sight of them will be odious to a man of virtue.

Keep company with the wise & good, or abstain from Company altogether. Remember the maxims you have been taught, & endeavour that the Graduates of this College may be distinguished for the uprightness & propriety of their conduct, as well as for their knowledge of men & things.

We have endeavoured to promote your interest while under our care, & have studied, watched & prayed for your improvement, in the midst of many sorrows & disappointments. We can give you no better lessons & advice than we have endeavoured to give to you already. May they be accompanied with the divine Blessing, that by a proper use of them, you may give joy to your Parents & friends, do honor to your Country, & to this Seminary, & prove blessings & ornaments to Society & your Country.